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Viewing cable 05PARIS8631, AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FORMER EU COMMISSION

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
05PARIS8631	2005-12-23 10:35	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Paris

Appears in these articles:
http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/documents-wikileaks/article/2011/02/09/wikileaks-les-visiteurs-de-l-ambassade_1477418_1446239.htm

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 008631

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2015

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FORMER EU COMMISSION
PRESIDENT JACQUES DELORS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce I. Turner for reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with Ambassador Stapleton on December 21, former EU Commission president Jacques Delors underlined his feeling that Europe is currently in a deep crisis, in part because of the lack of visionary European leadership, but also because of Europeans' hostility to EU enlargement, and disagreements among member states about foreign policy and socio-economic matters. The French people, he said, are trapped in a "schizophrenia" combining arrogance (the exaltation of France) with self-doubt. He did not see a politician on the French scene, on the left or the right, capable of leading France out of this malaise, and he refused to be drawn out about his preferences on either the left or the right. Delors nonetheless insisted that the Socialist Party was fundamentally pro-transatlantic, adding that no matter who is the victor in 2007, U.S.-French relations would improve. He concluded with the hope that the U.S. would pay more attention to the EU and noted the need for the U.S. and the EU to work as partners, and not rivals, to confront the challenges of the 21st century. END SUMMARY.

The Crisis in the EU

2. (C) Ambassador Stapleton met December 21 with Jacques Delors in his office at the Council of Employment, Income, and Social Cohesion, the government-affiliated think tank that Delors, 80, now heads. Delors said he believed Europe was in a deep crisis, from which it was proving difficult to emerge. First, the Europeans did not understand or appreciate the need for the May 2004 enlargement, which he characterized several times with great emotion as "imperative of history." As a young European activist in the 1950s, he said, he would not have imagined today's EU of 25. But the events of the second half of the century made it necessary to

enlarge. He welcomed the opening of accession talks with Turkey in the optic of preventing a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam.

13. (C) The second cause of crisis, Delors said, was the deep disagreements among EU member states on foreign policy (as exemplified by the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and in the lead up to Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003) and on socio-economic policy. On the latter, Delors discerned three divergent viewpoints among European actors: to the left is the English model, followed by Sweden; to the right, the French model; and in the middle, he said, is the path he himself advocated as commission president, but which finds few adherents today: the path of small steps. His view was that EU member states should attempt only to agree on concrete initiatives and put aside the mirage of a fully agreed foreign policy.

French Narcissism

14. (C) When asked how the EU might work its way out of the crisis, Delors responded that, regrettably, Europe currently lacked the visionary leaders of the past such as Adenauer, Schuman, Kohl, and Mitterand. The current heads of state, he said, had no real vision. He believed the new German government would play a positive role re-establishing equilibrium in Germany's relations with Europe and with the United States. But he was dismissive of President Chirac and the current government, arguing that this would not change until new presidential elections. More generally, he complained about a French predilection to put theory before practice, often with disastrous results. Similarly, the French system had difficulty reconciling its myth of unity with the existence of diversity.

15. (C) In regards to the French rejection of the EU constitutional treaty in the May 29 referendum, Delors described himself as "shocked" by the French notion that its own rejection of the constitutional treaty made it a dead letter. "What pretension!" he exclaimed. He continued that the other EU member states had the right to pronounce themselves on the treaty, and that the EU should not consider next steps until the views of all were on record. (Comment: Delors did not address the fact that some countries, such as the UK, might prefer not to go on record. End Comment.)

France's Identity Crisis

16. (C) Delors said France was now in a peculiar situation -- the French people are at once traumatised by their smaller role in the world and arrogant about their unique calling and ability to bring positive values to the world. The combination of this traumatism and arrogance, he said, made for a poisonous schizophrenia. He castigated as dangerous in particular those who "are tempted to exalt France's importance on the world scene." Unfortunately, he did not see a leader on the French political scene who could persuade the French people to abandon this delusional mindset in the interest of playing a more pragmatic, "useful" role in coordination with others, including the U.S. On the contrary, he expressed some concern that far-right politicians, through appeals to France's "post-Napoleonic reflex," would exacerbate the problem.

Improving U.S.-French Relations

17. (C) Further to the question of the 2007 presidential election, Delors said that no matter what the result, he believed the next French president will want to improve relations with the U.S. "It's impossible to maintain the current situation," he said. He insisted that the Socialist Party (PS) was fundamentally pro-American and pro-European, "pro-Atlantic" in his term, as was Francois Bayrou's centrist party UDF (Democratic Union for France), despite the decision of many PS members to vote against the constitution and the leadership's use of what could be called an anti-American rhetoric in its campaigning and public declarations.

18. (C) Delors insisted throughout the meeting that the U.S. and EU needed to work as partners, and not as rivals, to address the challenges of the twenty-first century, citing in particular the emergence of China. He saw a need for the U.S. to "pay more attention" to the mood in Europe, without giving undue consideration to public opinion polls and the media. Saying that "Europe is not as ill as it appears," Delors also expressed the hope, while acknowledging it was difficult, that U.S. politicians would become cognizant of the EU's potential. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

Stapleton